## AMENDMENTS TO THE CLAIMS

1. (currently amended): Hydrogel composition comprised of a mixture of

(A) a ~~water soluble or water dispersible hydrophilic~~ dextran polymer grafted with ~~oligomers or co-oligomers, wherein the oligomers or co-oligomers comprise~~ homo-oligomers of L-lactic acid, and

(B) a ~~water soluble or water dispersible hydrophilic~~ dextran polymer grafted with ~~oligomers or co-oligomers, wherein the oligomers or co-oligomers comprise~~ homo-oligomers of D-lactic acid,

in an aqueous system,

wherein said homo-oligomers of L-lactic acid and said homo-oligomers of D-lactic acid ~~interact noncovalently~~ have 7-25 lactic acid monomers on average.

2-14. (canceled)

15. (currently amended): Process for the preparation of a hydrogel comprising:

a) polymerizing L-lactic acid, optionally in the presence of a suitable initiator;

b) polymerizing D-lactic acid, optionally in the presence of a suitable initiator;

c) reacting the product of step a) with a suitable coupling compound and a ~~water soluble or water dispersible hydrophilic~~ dextran polymer to form a ~~water soluble or water dispersible hydrophilic~~ dextran polymer grafted with ~~oligomers or co-oligomers, wherein the oligomers or co-oligomers comprise~~ homo-oligomers of L-lactic acid;

d) reacting the product of step b) with a suitable coupling compound and a ~~water soluble or water dispersible hydrophilic~~ dextran polymer to form a ~~water soluble or water dispersible hydrophilic~~ dextran polymer grafted with ~~oligomers or co-oligomers, wherein the oligomers or co-oligomers comprise~~ homo-oligomers of D-lactic acid; ~~and~~

wherein said homo-oligomers of L-lactic acid and said homo-oligomers of D-lactic acid have 7-25 lactic acid monomers on average; and

e) mixing the product of step c) and the product of step d) in an aqueous system ~~such that the homo-oligomers of L-lactic acid and the homo-oligomers of D-lactic acid interact noncovalently~~ to provide said hydrogel.

16. (previously presented): Process according to claim 15, said suitable initiator comprising a primary or secondary hydroxyl group.

17. (previously presented): Process according to claim 15, wherein an active ingredient is added prior to or during step e).

18-23. (canceled)

24. (previously presented): A method for drug delivery comprising administering the hydrogel composition of claim 31.

25-26. (canceled)

27. (previously presented): Process according to claim 17, wherein the active ingredient is a drug to be released.

28. (previously presented): Process according to claim 27, wherein the drug to be released is selected from proteins and proteinaceous products.

29. (previously presented): Hydrogel composition according to claim 1, wherein the hydrogel is formed in microspheres.

30. (previously presented): Hydrogel composition according to claim 1, further comprising an active ingredient.

31. (previously presented): Hydrogel composition according to claim 30, wherein the active ingredient is a drug to be released.